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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC 0471

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001217

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/21/2018

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: SANJAR UMAROV'S WIFE DESCRIBES PRISON
VISIT

REF: A. TASHKENT 627
[1](#)B. TASHKENT 854
[1](#)C. TASHKENT 927
[1](#)D. TASHKENT 403
[1](#)E. TASHKENT 211
[1](#)F. TASHKENT 1200

Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During a meeting with poloff at the Embassy on October 21, Indira Umarova - the wife of imprisoned political oppositionist Sanjar Umarov (and a recently naturalized AmCit) - described her visit to her husband in prison and his poor health condition. What Umarova told poloff roughly matched what her son Gulam had reported in a widely distributed email from October 20. While Umarova stated her belief that her husband's health condition was dire and that he could soon die in prison, shQand others also reported that his condition appears to have improved somewhat since his transfer to the Tavvaksay prison a month and a half ago. We are concerned about the continued reports of Umarov's deteriorating health and we do not doubt the sincerity of his family, but without access to Uzbekistan's prisons, it is impossible for us to confirm Umarov's current condition. We are currently weighing how best to raise our concern with authorities, but one possibility is to request access to Umarov in prison. End summary.

UMAROVA VISITS HUSBAND AT PRISON ON OCTOBER 17...

[1](#)2. (C) During her meeting with poloff at the Embassy on October 21, Umarova was accompanied by her two young daughters (both U.S.-born AmCits), and Free Farmers opposition party leader Nigara Khidoyatova. Umarova reported visiting her husband at the Tavvaksay prison in Tashkent province on October 17. Umarov was reportedly transferred to the Tavvaksay prison from another prison in Navoi province roughly a month and a half ago. Umarova said she waited more than eight hours outside of the prison before they were granted access. Her daughters spent only a short period of

time with their father before leaving the prison (Umarova said she was uncomfortable with them staying overnight.) Umarova herself stayed overnight at the prison with her husband for a period of roughly seventeen hours.

...SHOCKED AT HUSBAND'S APPEARANCE

13. (C) Much of what Umarova told poloff about her husband's current condition matched what her son Gulam, who lives in the United States, reported in a widely distributed email from October 20. Umarova, who had not seen her husband since his imprisonment in 2005, was shocked by his current appearance, which she compared to that of "a German concentration camp victim." She said that he was very thin, "like a skeleton," and that his veins appeared to be protruding from his skin. She could not estimate his current weight.

REPORTS HUSBAND HAS TROUBLE SPEAKING, EATING, AND SLEEPING

14. (C) Umarova reported that her husband was very weak, and "only had the strength to speak in a whisper." She described her husband as semi-lucid. While he recognized his family and told them "to be strong," Umarov allegedly did not directly respond to most of his wife's questions and said nothing about his health or treatment in prison.

15. (C) Umarova reported that her husband would not eat the food she tried to feed him during the visit. She further speculated that he could no longer eat normal food and needed to be fed intravenously (Comment: This appears to be pure speculation on Umarova's part. Prison authorities did not tell her that Umarov was being fed intravenously, nor did she see any concrete evidence of this. End comment.) Umarova added that her husband did not sleep during the visit, but rocked back and forth in his chair most of the night with his arms folded over his head.

REPORTS SEEING SIGNS HUSBAND WAS PREVIOUSLY TORTURED

16. (C) Umarova reported seeing evidence on her husband's body that he had been previously tortured, but she was careful to explain that the abuse "was not recent" and occurred before Umarov was transferred to the Tavvaksay prison. She reported seeing welts and bruises on his calves and shins, which she believed were caused by beatings with a baton. She also reported that Umarov had a bump on the back of his head and seeing evidence on Umarov's arms that he had been given injections of some sort.

UMAROVA ASKS FOR WEST TO INTERVENE ON HUSBAND'S BEHALF

17. (C) Umarova stated her belief that her husband's health condition was dire and that he might die in prison before his family is given another chance to visit him again in December. Umarova requested that the United States intervene on her husband's behalf and ask that he be released from prison under article 75 of the criminal code, which allows prisoners to be released early due to poor health. Khidoyotova noted that another political prisoner, Mutabar Tojiboyeva, was released from prison on medical grounds earlier this year (ref A).

18. (C) Umarova reported that she planned to approach other Western Embassies to ask that they also intervene on Umarov's behalf. She also planned to meet with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) office in Tashkent, which restarted its prison monitoring program this year. As far as she knew, the ICRC had not yet met with Umarov in prison.

CONDITIONS REPORTEDLY BETTER AT NEW PRISON

¶9. (C) Both Umarova and Khidoyotova remarked that conditions at Tavvaksay, while far from perfect, were still an improvement over those at the prison in Navoi province where Umarov was previously held. Umarova explained that her husband was brought to Tavvaksay in his current state - and that if anything - his condition had improved at Tavvaksay. She noted that officials at Tavvaksay treated her "with respect" and appeared concerned about Umarov's health.

¶10. (C) Umarova reported that her sister-in-law visited Umarov at Tavvaksay on September 24 and was allowed to give him medicine. Umarova was reportedly told by another inmate that the medicine allowed Umarov to sleep better at night. In an email to poloff from September 28, Umarov's son Arslanbek reported that his aunt had found that Umarov's condition had improved since the last time she visited him in July (ref B and C).

¶11. (C) During a previous meeting with poloff in late September, Khidoyotova interpreted Umarov's transfer to Tavvaksay as a positive phenomenon. She noted that wealthier inmates, including former Uzbek officials, have reportedly paid bribes to be transferred to Tavvaksay, where conditions reportedly are better than at any other prison in Uzbekistan. Khidoyotova speculated that Umarov was transferred to Tavvaksay after authorities recognized that his health was

growing worse in Navoi.

VIEW FROM THE GERMAN EMBASSY

¶12. (C) Following the meeting with Umarova, poloff discussed the case with German poloff Uwe Berndt, who offered to investigate the possibility of having the EU intervene on Umarov's behalf with EU colleagues in Tashkent. Berndt believed that an EU intervention would carry more weight with the Uzbeks than a bilateral German intervention. After discussing the issue with the French Embassy, Berndt reported that it was unlikely that the EU would intervene on Umarov's behalf on its own. He also suggested that rather than raise concerns about Umarov's health that have not been verified, the best first step would be to request for foreign diplomats to be granted access to Umarov in prison to independently determine his present condition.

PREVIOUS REPORTS OF UMAROV'S CONDITION

¶13. (C) Umarov's family has reported on his deteriorating health condition since February (refs D and E). Little of Umarova's current observations regarding her husband's health appear to differ significantly from what her son Arslanbek reported to poloff in July (refs B and C). The Ambassador and visiting U.S. government officials have routinely raised Umarov's case with government officials during the past year, more so than for any other political prisoner in Uzbekistan. Concerns about Umarov's health also were raised by USOSCE at the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna on May 8.

AMCIT UMAROVA TRAVELED ON UZBEK PASSPORT

¶14. (C) Umarova, who recently became a naturalized AmCit and holds a U.S. passport, traveled to Uzbekistan on her Uzbek passport on October 11. When she tried to apply for an Uzbek visa through the Uzbek Embassy in Washington, she was reportedly told that she would first have to give up her Uzbek citizenship, a process they allegedly explained would take "three to five years" and which would require President Karimov's personal assent. Her daughters were granted Uzbek visas and traveled on their American passports.

¶15. (C) Umarova reported that she had been frequently followed since she arrived in Uzbekistan. While she has not been directly harassed, an unnamed National Security Service official cryptically warned her "to be careful in every way." She plans to depart Uzbekistan for the United States on

October 26. Umarova said she did not plan to return to Uzbekistan anytime soon, but her sister-in-law, who still lives in Uzbekistan, hoped to visit Umarov in prison again in December.

COMMENT

¶16. (C) We are concerned about the continued reports of Umarov's deteriorating condition in prison and have no doubts about the sincerity of his family. However, without access to Uzbekistan's prisons, it is impossible for us to independently verify Umarov's current condition. Our Embassy and visiting U.S. government officials have weighed in more heavily this past year on Umarov's behalf than for any other political prisoner in Uzbekistan, but we will continue to voice our concern regarding his health and urge authorities to either amnesty or release him on health grounds, as they have done recently for other political prisoners (ref F). We also will explore the possibility of first requesting access to Umarov in prison, as suggested by our German colleague.

NORLAND